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COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Twenty-second session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 6th MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Thursday, 27 April 2000, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mrs. BONOAN-DANDAN

later: Mr. CEAUSU
(Vice-Chairperson)

later: Mrs. BONOAN-DANDAN

CONTENTS

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS:

(a) REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLES 16 AND 17 OF THE COVENANT (continued)

Third periodic report of Italy

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GE.00-41676 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS:

(a) REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLES 16 AND 17 OF THE COVENANT (agenda item 6) (continued)

Third periodic report of Italy (E/1994/104/Add.19; E/C.12/Q/ITA/1; written replies to the list of issues prepared by the Government of Italy (document without a reference number))

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of Italy took their places at the Committee table.

2. Mr. MORENO (Italy) said that the Covenant called upon States parties to make continuous efforts to improve their standards in the fields it covered. As Italy's third periodic report had been submitted in 1997, it would be appropriate to present the numerous changes that had occurred in Italian life since then. The most important aspect had been the massive and continuous entry into Italy of significant numbers of foreigners. Over and above the influx of illegal immigrants from countries outside the European Union which Italy had faced in the past, the crisis in the Balkans had led increasing numbers of Bosnians, Albanians and Kosovars to enter the country. There were also large numbers of Kurdish and North African illegal immigrants.

3. The various groups tended to arrive in the country at different times and to stay for different periods. Currently, the immigrant groups from Africa and Asia, apart from the Indian subcontinent, were those which had stayed the longest; Latin Americans were generally more recent arrivals, and most immigrants from Eastern Europe had arrived only in the past few years.

4. At the beginning of 1998, immigrants who came from countries with high rates of emigration represented just over half the total immigrant population in Italy. Such immigrants were able to obtain a residence permit provided they could demonstrate that they had sufficient income and had committed no serious offences. Immigrants from outside the European Union were able to acquire Italian citizenship after a period of 10 years. About 122,000 people, including 57,000 Africans, had thus qualified for citizenship by 1 January 1998.

5. For over 10 years, women had accounted for 41.9 per cent of the immigrants registered in Italy, but that proportion was highly dependent on the country of origin. Among immigrants from Muslim countries it was very low, while it was highest for immigrants from the Dominican Republic, Brazil and the Philippines. In recent years the overall proportion of women among immigrants had risen from about 40 per cent in 1992 to nearly 45 per cent. There had been a marked increase among immigrants from countries with high emigration rates. The proportion of married couples who immigrated had risen as well. While many young women came to the country for family reunions, still more came for work-related reasons. The growth of female immigration, together with increases in the number of older and younger immigrants, had led to a normalization of the composition of the immigrant population, which had previously been dominated by single men.

6. Male immigration followed by family reunions was typical for the African countries, the North Africans in particular, and for Albanians. Among some national groups such as Peruvians, women with work permits tended to be the first immigrants and would be followed by other family members. In the case of Filipino immigrants, women workers predominated, but the low level of family reunions appeared to indicate that most of the women concerned intended to return to their country of origin.

7. In 1998 the number of foreigners holding residence permits for religious reasons came to 53,000, over half of whom were from countries with high emigration rates. The number of women holding such permits was generally low, except in the case of Indian women, who accounted for just over half of the Indian recipients of such permits.

8. Many of the foreigners who had entered the country illegally had requested refugee status or asylum. The new influx of immigrants had brought with it a need for housing for new arrivals both on an emergency basis and in more ordinary circumstances. The Government had therefore adopted Single Act No. 286/98, which stipulated inter alia that foreigners living in Italy had the same entitlement as Italian citizens to residential and public housing. It also granted equal entitlement to the services of the regional and local public agencies, whose aim was to facilitate access to housing and provide credit for the construction, acquisition or leasing of a first home.

9. A national fund had been established to assist in setting up reception centres and temporary and permanent accommodation for immigrants, and responsibility for providing such services had been assigned to the regional and local authorities, who were to work with public and private agencies, foundations, associations and voluntary organizations. The Single Act stipulated that employers requesting a work permit for foreign workers had to demonstrate that lodging facilities were available for them and had to provide housing for them at their own expense.

10. A number of local initiatives had been taken by municipalities, cooperatives and voluntary organizations, especially in the north-central part of the country, with the aim of increasing immigrants' access to the private housing market and of establishing a housing stock to be rented out at subsidized rates.

11. Another Act adopted in 1998, No. 1998/40, stipulated that regional and local authorities should take preventive measures against housing discrimination, for example by assisting the social integration of foreigners. In particular, it called for the establishment of reception centres to host foreigners in need of help and to encourage them to become more independent. The same law stipulated that foreign workers were entitled to the same access to public housing as Italian citizens.

12. In 1998, as an exceptional measure, the Ministry of the Interior had granted 300,000 special residence permits to foreigners who had entered Italy illegally.

13. In December 1999 the Government had adopted Act No. 482 as a framework law which laid down standards for the protection of linguistic and ethnic minorities, in conformity with the provisions of article 6 of the Constitution and various international instruments. Its objective was to defend the language and culture of the Albanian, Catalan, German, Greek, Slovenian,

Croat, French, Provençal, Friulian, Ladino, Occitan and Sardinian communities. The Act reserved a special role for the regions, provinces and municipalities where such groups lived, and stipulated that regional legislation concerning minorities must be at least as favourable to the minority groups as the provisions contained in the national law. Regions with special status were to conduct appropriate consultation procedures for their minorities, and those groups which were scattered over various regions or provinces could set up advisory and consultation bodies to work with local authorities.

14. The Act also defended public education in the protected languages. For example, minority languages were to be used alongside Italian in kindergartens, and could be taught as a school subject in primary and secondary schools at the request of the parents. Under the provisions of the Act, public administrations were required to ensure that services could be provided in the minority languages. Place names conforming to local customs and traditions could be used alongside official ones. In certain municipalities, individuals from minority groups whose names had been adapted to Italian forms were able to change their own names and those of their descendants back to the original. Other provisions were aimed at ensuring that press and media services were provided in the protected languages. The Act also called for agreements to be concluded with other States so as to ensure the rights of ethnic minorities in Italy and of Italian minorities abroad.

15. Mr. SADI said that he understood that large-scale immigration was a concern for Italy, as it placed a burden on the country's housing, education and health infrastructure. Immigrants had various reasons for choosing to go to one country rather than another, and in Italy's case, one main reason was the warmth, hospitality and tolerance of the Italian people. Did the Italian Government foresee a negative reaction in Italy such as that which had occurred in other European countries? If so, then perhaps Italy and other countries in the same situation should consider the possibility of accelerating investment in the countries which were the source of large-scale migratory flows. It would appear to be less costly for the European countries to reduce, if not eliminate, the problem of large-scale immigration by ensuring that sufficient resources were invested in such countries of origin.

16. Mr. RIEDEL said that the Italian people were indeed renowned for their hospitality and tolerance toward foreigners. The country's internal problems were generally not used, as in certain other countries, as a pretext for xenophobia. He would like to raise certain points related directly to the Covenant.

17. Article 10 of the Italian Constitution guaranteed for foreigners the right to apply for asylum, but stopped short of guaranteeing the right to asylum itself. That provision had no implementing legislation, presumably because the Government had decided that an asylum law would not be the appropriate means of dealing with immigration, and had instead adopted the 1998 Act concerning foreigners. The number of people who had actually been granted asylum was exceedingly small in comparison with those in other European countries. Perhaps the delegation could provide some explanation.

18. The fate of the hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants was of great concern to the Committee. Were their economic, social and cultural rights protected? Many from Kosovo, Albania, Bosnia, Kurdistan and North Africa had been caught up in drug dealing, prostitution

and trafficking in migrants. How was the Government coping with those problems? Were there any agencies or police services which inspected work sites to see whether illegal aliens were employed there? If so, what had been done to ensure that the family situations of such persons were taken into consideration and that the provisions of the Covenant were not violated?

19. As in other European countries, it could take up to eight years to settle the cases of people who contested their legal status as foreigners. Was the Italian Government making any efforts to shorten that period? After the deportation of such individuals, could their cases still be appealed and the process carried through on their behalf?

20. Mr. GRISSA commended the clarity of the delegation's introduction, which had concentrated for the most part on Italy's immigrants, many of whom originated in his country, Tunisia. Both President Ciampi and the Governor of the Central Bank had recently spoken of the need for such migrants, in the light of Italy's declining labour force and the fact that there were many services which Italians did not wish to provide. He wondered whether there was not excessive concern about immigrants, especially considering that more Italians lived outside Italy than in it.

21. Mr. AHMED joined in welcoming the large and high-powered delegation, which augured well for a constructive discussion. He asked what conditions immigrants must meet in order to obtain a residence permit, whether they were all treated equally, which categories of immigrant could and could not work in Italy, and whether they were permitted to reside in towns or forced to inhabit camps specified by the Italian authorities.

22. He sought clarification regarding the situation of the Roma. Were they considered immigrants, Italians or nomads? Were they integrated into Italian society? Did they live in camps or among Italians? Contrary to the declaration in Italy's second periodic report, which had been examined in 1997, the United States Department of State had reported that the Roma were both physically and culturally isolated.

23. Mr. WIMER ZAMBRANO remarked that opposition from conservative groups usually accompanied any heavy influx of immigrants. Indeed, in Italy supremacist groups had recently caused disruption which the authorities were endeavouring to suppress. Sharing the Adriatic with the Balkans, Italy had traditional ties with those countries, so that migration from them was neither new nor unnatural. He asked whether there were any legal or practical differences in the treatment meted out to the various groups.

24. Mr. MORENO (Italy) requested a suspension for five minutes so that the Italian delegation could confer.

25. The CHAIRPERSON said that, since the written replies had arrived too late to be translated from English, she would request the delegation to provide a brief summary of the written replies to each question during their oral replies so that Committee members could be apprised of them in their working languages.

The meeting was suspended at 4.01 p.m. and resumed at 4.12 p.m.

26. Mr. Ceausu, Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.

27. Mr. MORENO (Italy) said that, despite Italy's acknowledged hospitality and spirit of tolerance and its civilization enriched by inputs from many cultures, judicial machinery had been set in motion in 1998-1999 to ensure citizenship rights for a newer category of immigrants fleeing war and disease in their countries, with all that it implied for social and political life. Mr. Sadi's suggestion to increase investment in the countries of origin of the bulk of immigrants was in fact the core of Italy's development cooperation policy; it was establishing agreements on migrant flows and productive investment in the Mediterranean area. Such a policy, however, should not be the preserve of any one country; it must engage all countries in Europe in a common endeavour. The Council of Europe, the European Union and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development had fully grasped the importance of obtaining information from countries on projected migrant flows so that they could be regulated and plans made to accommodate them.

28. Xenophobic reactions in some Italian circles, as mentioned by Mr. Riedel, were a major concern of the authorities. He agreed that Italy itself had given millions of people to other countries of the world, each exodus triggering a generation of lost time. While it was important to find new solutions to the immigrant problem, asylum was probably not the correct procedure, since the new immigrants were fleeing poor conditions in their countries. There was neither a quota system nor any other distinction between ethnic groups. On the sole basis of arrival date, all the 350,000 or so persons seeking to remain in Italy had been accepted, despite the fact that the authorities had received no background information on them from their countries. All asylum-seekers were free to return to Italy to defend their case at any stage of the proceedings.

29. The immigration coin did, however, have another side, in that recent immigration also brought with it a terrible chain of criminality involving ruthless, determined people intent on finding a new centre for their drug-trafficking, prostitution and other activities. Indeed, given the magnitude of the phenomenon, the crime of trafficking in immigrants had been codified. It was that aspect that was at the root of the intolerance shown by some Italians.

30. There was a vigorous labour inspectorate, and illegal workers were encouraged to denounce their employers so that the Government could organize social protection for them. He agreed with Mr. Grissa that immigrant workers were needed for their work, their skills and their culture in the interdependent world in which we lived, a need foreseen by the National Council for Economy and Labour. All European countries needed new inputs, especially since the labour shortfall for certain categories of work encouraged substitution. Italy did not protest against immigrants, it simply wished to plan and organize in such a way that the authorities could take responsibility for them.

31. Replying to a question from Mr. Ahmed, he said that there was no discrimination among categories of immigrants, nor were there any permanent camps. The Italian authorities recognized the need for temporary camps to give clandestine immigrants an opportunity to establish their identity, but it was attempting to replace them with a structure run by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the like.

32. Italy had 130,000 registered Roma, 80,000 of them Italian citizens, who were free to go wherever they wished. However, transitory camps - although not compulsory - had been organized for those still attached to the nomadic system. The first victims of any unrest in Roma camps near large cities were the people who came into contact with them, hence the need for regulation. The Senate was currently examining a draft law on protection of the right to nomadism.

33. The fact that the Roma in Italy, even those who were Italian citizens, came from so many different countries made it more difficult to grant them recognition and protection as a linguistic minority. He noted that the draft law would allow the Roma to opt for statelessness, in line with the New York Convention. It also directed special attention to schooling. Provision was made for educational courses designed to meet their special needs. About 4,000 Roma children from different nomadic camps had already been integrated into the Roman school system. Legislative action at the local level could lead to encouraging results, especially in regard to the management and organization of the transit camps. Every now and then, of course, there might be small clashes with local communities which resented the presence of large numbers of nomads. At the same time, strenuous efforts were being made to provide the Gypsy community with adequate living conditions. For example, in the southern region of Calabria, a permanent camp had been set up that offered public housing designed by the Roma themselves in keeping with their own traditions. The results, in terms of stabilizing a population that was no longer nomadic, had been highly satisfactory.

34. The Administration was continuing to follow the Roma question very closely. Despite the relatively small size of the population involved, only some 130,000 persons, it presented many problems. The last influx had consisted of Roma from Kosovo, where they had been subjected to persecution on account of their supposed support for the Serbs. That had led in turn to a problem of coexistence with other Roma. Nevertheless, the Administration continued to believe that the right way to solve the problem as a whole was through the introduction of comprehensive legislation that could create the basis for a lasting solution.

35. Mr. WIMER ZAMBRANO had brought up the problem of racism. Throughout the world, the presence of large numbers of immigrants tended to be used as a tool to stir political emotions. Italy, like other countries, had a problem of that sort, which it needed to tackle decisively. The question was fundamental: unless equal treatment was achieved for people of different colour, sex, origin and language, the rule of law would never be ensured, either at home or abroad. He noted that Italy was to have the honour of presiding over the forthcoming Conference against Racism. It was a great responsibility that would entail a major effort on its part in order to help find the best means of tackling the root causes of the problem. Italy, as a country with a history of emigration, had itself suffered from racism, which perhaps made it more sensitive to the need to create conditions that would prevent the erection of racist barriers between people with the same human needs engaged in doing the same work. Italy would be glad to have the support of the members of the Committee at the forthcoming meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the Conference. He emphasized that the problem of racism was still very much alive, throughout Europe, and highly dangerous.

36. The CHAIRPERSON invited the Committee to proceed to the consideration of part I of the list of issues, covering the general legal framework within which human rights were protected. As the Italian Government's written replies had been distributed only in English, he would ask the delegation to begin with a brief summary of its responses to questions 1 to 5.

37. Mr. CITARELLA (Italy) said that, following the discussion of Italy's second periodic report, the Committee's concluding observations had been circulated among all the government departments involved and Italian NGOs, both of which had urged the Administration to take those comments into account in its plans for the future. The provisions of the Covenant had been invoked before Italian courts, although the Covenant itself, most of whose provisions were covered by domestic legislation, was not explicitly referred to. In practice, judges normally applied the domestic legislation. Action to disseminate the rights embodied in the Covenant had included activities in celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. An ad hoc committee set up to supervise initiatives organized by NGOs and other private bodies as well as by universities and public institutions had encouraged and financed more than 50 projects of various types relating to the principles contained in the Declaration and the provisions embodied in the two Covenants.

38. Mr. SADI said that the response to question 2, namely that the provisions of the Covenant had been invoked before the courts but that very few rulings referred to it explicitly, caused him some concern. Without any specific reference to the Covenant, the Italian people would be unaware of its relevance to their judicial system. On the question of Italy's position on the optional protocol, he urged the Government to reach beyond passive support and instead spearhead a campaign in favour of its preparation and adoption. Those countries which supported the idea of preparing an optional protocol needed to take a more affirmative approach. Otherwise, the idea would continue to hang fire for another 10 years.

39. Mr. ANTANOVICH said that the statement in reply to question 5 of the list of issues that various universities had organized postgraduate courses on the principles contained in the two Covenants could be taken to imply that not all Italian universities had done so. He would like more information on the status of human rights teaching in Italy: for example, what kinds of student took the courses and who did the teaching?

40. Mr. HUNT said that he wished to ask a question which was not included in the list of issues but was, he believed, of considerable importance. Italy's representative in the World Bank, as was to be expected given the size of its economy, enjoyed a weighted vote that gave the country one of the largest votes in the organization. As well as representing Italy, he spoke on behalf of a cluster of other World Bank member countries, including Portugal, Greece, Malta and Albania, all of which, like Italy, had ratified the Covenant. He wished to know, therefore, whether the Italian Government took any steps to ensure that Italy's representative in the World Bank took the Covenant into account in carrying out his responsibilities. The matter was especially pertinent when the World Bank was considering a loan or other programme in relation to a recipient State which had also ratified the Covenant. He believed that his question was relevant to the effective implementation of the Covenant and thus to the work of the Committee. In the spirit of constructive dialogue, he would appreciate a candid response.

41. Mr. CEVILLE said that he would like to revert to the topic of the direct application of the Covenant in judicial decision-making. Did international provisions automatically form part of national legislation, or must they, in order to be applied, first be translated into domestic legislation? He would also like to know what information judges and other judicial authorities received in that connection. For example, were special seminars organized to enhance their familiarity with the provisions of the Covenant?

42. Mr. AHMED said that he would like to hear further comment from the delegation regarding Italy's response to article 3 of the Covenant, on equality between men and women. Given the great respect accorded to mothers in Italian family life and society, could the delegation explain the persistent lack of equal opportunity for women noted by the Human Rights Committee in its concluding observations in 1998?

43. The CHAIRPERSON said that Mr. Ahmed's question related to the following section of the list of issues, on the general provisions of the Covenant. He suggested that the delegation should reply first to the comments connected to questions 1 to 5.

44. Mr. CITARELLA (Italy) said that, in the Italian legal system, the provisions of international agreements ratified by the Government were part of the law of the land and applied immediately. It would be possible to look into the text of various legal judgements in order to see if precise reference was made to the Covenant. However, it was normally the case that in the general framework of their decisions judges referred to Italian legislation, the provisions of which were more detailed than the rules set out in the Covenant. The Covenant was not ignored, however, and it could be invoked by individuals. Efforts were being made to arrange special courses for judges to enhance their knowledge of the rules of the Covenant. In reply to the question why only some Italian universities offered special courses on human rights, he explained that universities in Italy were completely independent and that no general guidance was given regarding the courses offered. Certain universities, therefore, had chosen to offer special courses. The University of Padua, in conjunction with 15 other European universities, conferred a degree of Master of Human Rights which was accepted throughout the European Union. Other universities gave courses on human rights which were attended by ordinary students, civil servants and human rights professionals. The last year had seen a proliferation of such courses.

45. Mrs. Bonoan-Dandan resumed the Chair.

46. Mr. RIEDEL said that the statement in the reply to question 2 that Italian domestic legislation had created a set of rules and regulations that were more advanced than the provisions of the Covenant could be taken to imply that the Government did not regard it as necessary to adopt an optional protocol. An optional protocol could have meaning only if it was obligatory for all member States which had ratified the Covenant to make it clear that there were identifiable economic, social and cultural rights on which individuals could rely. That point had not been addressed in the response of the delegation.

47. Mr. CITARELLA (Italy) reiterated that the rules of the Covenant were directly and immediately applicable in Italy. Thus, any individual could ask the judge to apply those rules. However, in many cases, the individual concerned, not the judge but the individual plaintiff,

would find something more specific in Italian law on which he could rely. It should not be forgotten that under the European Convention on Human Rights a court had been established that was empowered to make decisions having final and executive force in Italy. Over a period of 20 years, only a very small number of claims had been filed against Italy under the Optional Protocol on Civil and Political Rights. The reason was that any person interested could apply to the court in Strasbourg, where he could hope to receive not only a binding decision in his favour but a special indemnity.

48. Mr. MORENO (Italy), replying to Mr. Hunt's question, said that the World Bank's approach, traditionally profit-oriented, had been changing recently to take greater account of human rights issues. The Italian Government endeavoured to ensure, in its dealings with the World Bank, that the right to development was adequately taken into account in action taken by the World Bank in developing countries. It also tried to give appropriate guidance to its representatives in the World Bank on that issue. It was organizing three seminars on the question of how to reconcile the traditional profit-based approach of the World Bank with the principle of protecting basic human rights.

49. Mr. HUNT welcomed the increasing awareness in Italy of the importance of economic, social and cultural rights issues, and human rights issues in general, in the work of international financial institutions. However, he wished to point out that he had been referring not to the right to development, but rather to the obligations set out in the Covenant, particularly the obligations relating to international cooperation mentioned in article 2.1. He would like to know whether those obligations were a subject of discussion between the Government of Italy and the country's representatives in the World Bank.

50. Mr. MORENO (Italy), recalling that a recent meeting of the G8 countries had agreed to cancel up to 80 per cent of the debt of certain countries, said that a new law had been introduced in Italy to allow the cancellation of a further 20 per cent of debt, provided that the countries in question were taking sufficient action to fulfil the obligations laid down in the Covenant. In that way, a link was being created between financial benefits and respect for human rights.

51. In reply to Mr. Ahmed's question, he said that the role of women in Italian society had traditionally been to take care of all the needs of the family. The welfare system had also been organized on that basis and might therefore have discouraged women from working in the past. However, a law on parental leave had recently been adopted, giving both mothers and fathers the right to take up to 10 months' leave within the first eight years of a child's life. The law was intended to promote a more even balance between work and family responsibilities.

52. Women were increasingly well represented in the labour market. In 1997 and 1998, 67 per cent of new jobs had been occupied by women. In the first quarter of 1999, that figure had risen to 80 per cent. Women currently accounted for just over one third of the workforce and the total number of women in employment was increasing at a faster rate than that of men. The number of self-employed women and the number of women in middle- and high-ranking professional positions had also increased in recent years. The one field in which women were not yet adequately represented was politics. The Government of Italy was aware of the seriousness of the problem and was considering the introduction of a system of quotas to increase the number of female members of Parliament.

53. The CHAIRPERSON invited the members of the Committee to ask follow-up questions relating to Nos. 8 and 9 on the list of issues.

54. Mrs. JIMÉNEZ BUTRAGUEÑO said that, since she had had some difficulty following the reply made by the representative of Italy, she was not sure whether he had provided any information not already given in the written replies. She would be grateful if any additional information could be provided in writing. However, she welcomed the fact that men as well as women were now entitled to parental leave and she would like to know how many men were exercising that right.

55. Mr. THAPALIA pointed out that, in the concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on the tenth and eleventh periodic reports of Italy, contained in document CERD/C/304/Add.68, concern had been expressed about the segregation of Roma people in Italian society, partly resulting from the fact that many of them lived in camps outside major cities. A report by the United States Department of State had also highlighted the fact that Roma people were often unable to obtain residence and work permits because they had no identity documents from their country of origin and could be deported. Without a legal source of income, they often turned to begging and petty crime. A third report, from Save the Children, mentioned the very low enrolment rate of Roma children in schools and universities. In the light of those reports, he would like to know what measures the Government was taking to ensure that Roma people were not subjected to discrimination, in practice and not just in theory. He also asked what steps were being taken to improve educational and employment opportunities for Roma people and to remove obstacles to participation by Roma people in the process of making decisions that directly affected them.

56. Mr. PILLAY, noting that there were significant economic and social disparities between the north and south of Italy, which had an adverse impact on women and children in particular, asked what action was being taken by the Government to redress that imbalance.

57. Mr. MORENO (Italy), replying to Mrs. Jiménez Butragueño's question, said that he had merely wished to point out that the Government of Italy was taking new measures to ensure that the burden of child-rearing was shared between men and women. A new law adopted in March 2000 granted equal support to mothers and fathers in raising children so that a better balance between work and child care could be achieved. That law established the right to parental leave for both mothers and fathers.

58. Mr. CITARELLA (Italy), replying to Mr. Thapalia's questions about Roma people, said that the situation of Roma was a pressing issue in many countries in Europe. Of the 30,000 Roma resident in Italy, 80 per cent were Italian citizens. There was, in fact, no precise definition of the term "Roma" since it covered more than 100 different minorities with various origins and languages. It was therefore difficult to form a coherent approach to dealing with their needs. Another problem was that Roma people were nomadic. A number of regional rules were in place dealing specifically with nomadic minorities, and special administrative instructions had been issued allowing the children of nomadic people to move freely from one school to another. The Ministry of Justice had also adopted special procedures for notifying nomadic people of information about judicial proceedings affecting them, since that could be

difficult if the people in question were of no fixed abode. In addition, a new law currently being debated in Parliament referred to nomadic people rather than to Roma, since the latter term was more difficult to define.

59. There was not so much a problem of discrimination against Roma people as a problem of intolerance. In some towns with a large Roma population, Roma people sometimes jumped the queue to obtain housing, which could cause resentment among the local population.

60. Mr. MORENO (Italy), replying to Mr. Pillay's question, said that the long-standing disparity between the north and the south of Italy in terms of the pace of development was still a problem. Because of the difficulty of finding work in the south of the country, many people migrated to the north. There was no discrimination, however, between north and south, although sometimes there were problems in providing migrants with adequate housing and decent living conditions. For many years, southern Italy in general had received extra investment; that approach was being replaced by action targeted at particular groups of disadvantaged people. For example, pursuant to Law No. 196, adopted in 1997, resources and support were being provided specifically for young unemployed people in the south. In Sicily, efforts were under way to encourage growth in the information technology sector.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.